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Message Text

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64/51
ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 CIAE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 AID-20 OMB-01 CU-04 EB-11 DRC-01

/111 W
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O 221632Z MAY 74
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3514
INFO AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
AMEMBASSY SAIGON
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI
AMCONSUL UDORN
AMCONSUL SONGKHLA
SECDEF IMMEDIATE
DIA IMMEDIATE
CINCPAC NIACT IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 8368

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y -- TEXT --

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, TH
SUBJECT: ANALYSIS OF EVENTS LEADING TO CABINET RESIGNATION

REF: A. BANGKOK 7908; B. BANGKOK 7998; C. BANGKOK 8173;

SUMMARY: A GROWING VOLUME OF CRITICISM IN THE PRESS AND THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (NLA), PLUS DEMANDS FOR THE RESIGNATION OF CERTAIN MINISTERS AND THREATS BY SEVERAL CABINET MINISTERS TO RESIGN LED TO THE RESIGNATION OF THE SANYA
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THAMMASAK GOVERNMENT, EFFECTIVE MAY 22. PRIME MINISTER

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SANYA RETURNED FROM AN AUDIENCE WITH THE KING IN HUA HIN MAY 15 SAYING HE WOULD CARRY ON DESPITE THE RESIGNATION OF DEPUTY EDUCATION MINISTER BUNSOM MARTIN AND THE GROWING PROTEST OVER THE REAPPOINTMENT OF DR. SAK PHASUKNIRAN AS RECTOR OF RAMKHAMHAENG UNIVERSITY. CRITICISM OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S INDECISIVENESS AND THE RESIGNATION OF FINANCE MINISTER BUNMA WONGSAWAN PRECIPITATED SANYA'S DECISION TO RESIGN. EVEN THE MILD-MANNERED, EVEN-TEMPERED SANYA HAD FINALLY HAD IT. END SUMMARY.

1. THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE OF PRIME MINISTER SANYA'S DECISION TO RESIGN WAS THE DESIRE OF SEVERAL OF HIS MINISTERS TO LEAVE THE CABINET. DEPUTY EDUCATION MINISTER BUNSOM MARTIN WAS THE FIRST TO ANNOUNCE HIS INTENTION TO RESIGN (REF A) BECAUSE HE HAD FAILED TO FULFILL HIS PROMISE TO DISMISSED PRIVATE SCHOOL TEACHERS THAT HE WOULD FIND EMPLOYMENT FOR THEM BY MAY 10. SANYA TRANSFORMED THIS RELATIVELY MINOR MATTER INTO A MAJOR CRISIS BY SAYING PUBLICLY WHAT HE HAD FOR SOMETIME MAINTAINED PRIVATELY-- THAT THE ENTIRE CABINET SHOULD RESIGN IF ANY MEMBER STEPPED DOWN. BUNSOM'S IMPENDING RESIGNATION PLUS GROWING STUDENT ANGER OVER THE CABINET'S UNWILLINGNESS TO REVERSE THE RAMKHAMHAENG UNIVERSITY COUNCIL'S DECISION TO REAPPOINT CONTROVERSIAL RECTOR DR. SAK PHASUKNIRAN (REF B) PRECIPITATED SANYA'S MAY 15 TRIP TO HUA HIN TO SEE THE KING. UPSET AT PUBLIC CRITICISM OF HIS MINISTERS AND OF HIS OWN INDECISIVENESS IN SOLVING THE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS, SANYA SOUGHT THE KING'S PERMISSION TO RESIGN. THE KING EVIDENTLY PERSUADED SANYA TO ACCEPT BUNSOM'S RESIGNATION AND TO CARRY ON AS PRIME MINISTER.

2. UPON HIS RETURN FROM HUA HIN, SANYA ANNOUNCED BUNSOM'S IRREVERSIBLE DECISION TO RESIGN BUT SAID THAT HE EXPECTED NO OTHER RESIGNATIONS AND KNEW OF NO OTHER REASONS FOR ANYONE ELSE TO RESIGN (REF C). NEVERTHELESS, HE TOLD INDIVIDUAL CABINET MEMBERS TO MAKE THEIR OWN DECISION ON WHETHER TO STAY IN OFFICE AND TO INFORM HIM OF THEIR DECISIONS IN WRITING. SANYA REPORTEDLY MADE UP HIS MIND TO RESIGN ON MAY 20 WHEN HE RECEIVED RESIGNATION LETTERS FROM FINANCE MINISTER BUNMA WONGSAWAN AND HIS DEPUTY YUN SUSAYAN. BUNMA, WHO HAD BEEN THE TARGET OF MUCH CONFIDENTIAL

UNFAIR PUBLIC CRITICISM OF THE CABINET'S INABILITY TO SOLVE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, DECIDED TO CALL IT QUITS. SANYA APPARENTLY SUBMITTED HIS RESIGNATION TO THE KING BY LETTER MAY 20.

3. WHEN SANYA MET WITH HIS CABINET ON MAY 21, HE ANNOUNCED BUNMA'S RESIGNATION AND INFORMED THE CABINET THAT HE HAD ALSO SUBMITTED HIS RESIGNATION. AFTER SOME

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DISCUSSION THE REST OF THE CABINET AGREED THAT THEY SHOULD
ALL RESIGN AND MOVED UP THE EFFECTIVE DATE FROM JUNE 1
TO MAY 22.

4. COMMENT: THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE SANYA GOVERNMENT
WAS UNDER GREAT PRESSURE. PUBLIC DEMANDS FOR THE RESIGNATION
OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS MULTIPLIED IN RECENT WEEKS.
NEVERTHELESS SANYA COULD HAVE WITHSTOOD DEMANDS FOR
A CABINET RESHUFFLE BY ALLOWING A FEW MINISTERS TO
RESIGN THEIR POSTS INSTEAD OF TAKING THE PUBLIC POSITION
THAT THE ENTIRE CABINET SHOULD RESIGN IF ANY MEMBER
STEPPED DOWN. SANYA'S MAY 15 TRIP TO HUA HIN ONLY INCREASED
EXPECTATIONS THAT THERE WOULD BE A MAJOR CABINET RE-
SHUFFLE AND DEMANDS FOR THE REPLACEMENT OF INDIVIDUAL
MINISTERS. SIMILARILY, THE GOVERNMENT COULD HAVE
DEFUSED THE ISSUE OF DR. SAK'S REAPPOINTMENT BY ASKING
THE RAMKHAMHAENG UNIVERSITY COUNCIL TO RECONSIDER ITS
DECISION AND BY ACCEPTING THE RESIGNATION OF GENERAL
SAWAENG SENANARONG AS CHAIRMAN OF THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL,
AS IT SUBSEQUENTLY DID.

5. THE BUNSOM AND SAK ISSUES SERVED TO CRYSTALIZE DIS-
SATISFACTION WITH THE LACKLUSTER SANYA GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE
TO COME TO GRIPS WITH ECONOMIC PROBLEMS (MANY BEYOND ITS
CONTROL) AND ITS ABSENCE OF AN IMAGE OF POSITIVE LEADER-
SHIP. THE REAL REASON FOR THE SANYA GOVERNMENT'S
RESIGNATION WAS ITS EXHAUSTION FROM THE CONSTANT PRESSURE
OF PUBLIC CRITICISM AND DEMANDS. ALTHOUGH THE THAI PRESS
HAS BEEN INCREASINGLY CRITICAL OF THIS GOVERNMENT, THE
LEVEL OF CRITICISM WOULD BE TOLERABLE IN MOST WESTERN
DEMOCRACIES. THAI POLITICAL LEADERS, HOWEVER, ARE NOT
USED TO THE ADVERSARY RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A FREE PRESS
AND WHATEVER GOVERNMENT IS IN POWER, AND THE SANYA GOVERN-
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MENT HAD FINALLY HAD ENOUGH. ACTUALLY WE BELIEVE
SANYA HAD GREATER POPULAR SUPPORT THAN THE PRESS COVERAGE
WOULD INDICATE. THIS THEME IS NOW STARTING TO COME OUT AND,
IN DEFEAT, SANYA IS ATTRACTING MORE SYMPATHY AND SUPPORT THAN
WHEN IN OFFICE.
MASTERS

NNN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL STABILITY, CABINET, PRIME MINISTER, PERSONNEL RESIGNATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 MAY 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GarlanWA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974BANGKO08368
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740127-1165
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740528/aaaaaypf.tel
Line Count: 160
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: A. BANGKOK 7908; B. BANGKOK 7998; C.
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GarlanWA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 10 JUL 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <10 JUL 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <28 FEB 2003 by GarlanWA>
Review Markings:

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US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ANALYSIS OF EVENTS LEADING TO CABINET RESIGNATION
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, TH, (BUNSOM MARTIN), (SANYA THAMMASAK)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

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